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# A Tang-Dynasty Manual of Governance and the East Asian Vernaculars

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## ABSTRACT

The *Essentials of Government in the Zhenguan Era* (*Zhenguan zhengyao*) is a text that was compiled in the Tang dynasty after the death of the founding emperor, Taizong (r. 626-649). It circulated widely throughout East Asia but unlike many other texts that emanated from China it was often approached via the vernacular: there were translations into the Tangut, Khitan, Jurchen, Mongolian, and Japanese languages, but not into Korean. This article explores its reception in various East Asian societies and suggests that the use of the vernacular was determined by the role of this work as a practical manual.

**Keywords:** *Zhenguan zhengyao*, *Jōgan seiyō*, *Chōnggwan chōng'yo*, *Essentials of government in the Zhenguan reign*, *Minh Mệnh chính yếu*, translation, vernacular, Hayashi Razan, Tang dynasty

For most parts of East Asia except Tibet, the earliest encounters with texts were with those from China, the only society with a writing system and a textual tradition they had so far come into contact with. By the end of the Tang dynasty we can be sure that huge quantities of texts in the form of paper manuscripts had reached China's neighbours, but the only hard evidence of the enormous scale of this flow of texts comes from Japan, in the form of the *Catalogue of Books Extant in Japan* (*Nihonkoku genzai shomokuroku* 日本國見在書目錄), which was compiled in the 890s by Fujiwara no Sukeyo 藤原佐世 (847-898). The *Catalogue* lists a bewildering variety of texts that had reached Japan, many of them now lost. And yet it does not list some texts known to be in Japan by that time, such as Buddhist scriptures and commentaries and medical texts. For medical and scientific texts, an edict issued in 757 gives us the curriculum of the University in seven fields of study (Classics, Histories, Medicine, Acupuncture, Astronomy, Yinyang divination, and Calendrical science) and thus provides some information about the medical and scientific books that had reached Japan by this time, but a later source, the *Essentials of Medicine* (*Ishinpō* 醫心方) by Tanba no Yasuyori 丹波康賴 (912-995), provides much more detailed information (Bender and Zhao 2010). This text was compiled in 984 after the fall of the Tang and it contains extracts from large numbers of Chinese and a few Korean medical works mentioned by name, showing that these too had reached Japan. Since all these texts were available in Japan, the overwhelming probability is that they were already available on the Korean

peninsula and in the northern part of what is now Vietnam, even though detailed records such as those we have for Japan do not survive there. After all, the kingdom of Silla, the southernmost of the three kingdoms of Korea, founded a state academy in 682 and in the course of the Tang dynasty 58 of its graduates were well enough prepared to pass the metropolitan examinations in China, so a good supply of texts must have been available in Silla (*Samguk sagi*, ch. 8, 1: 96, and ch. 38, 380-81).

### **The Chinese Text of the *Essentials of Government in the Zhenguan Era***

Most of the texts flowing out of China were either Buddhist scriptures and commentaries on them or texts associated with the Confucian tradition, though there were some of more recent authorship that were also highly valued. One of these was the *Essentials of Government in the Zhenguan Reign* (*Zhenguan zhengyao* 貞觀政要). This largely neglected work, which circulated widely throughout East Asia from the Tang dynasty onwards and survives today in a large number of manuscripts and printed editions, is unusual for two reasons: firstly, because its movements across East Asia can be traced in some detail, and secondly, because it was often translated instead of being read in the original literary Chinese. In this article I attempt to reconstruct the East Asian trajectories of the *Essentials of Government* and consider the reasons for the unusual fate of this work, which was still being used as a guide to statecraft in Japan in the early part of the twentieth century (Tokutomi 1915, 1; Harada 1965, 51). Indeed, it is enjoying something of a revival at present, with various sites on the internet inviting people to learn lessons for today from it, and books offering, for example, lectures on the *Essentials of Government in the Zhenguan Reign* for business leaders (Taguchi 2015).

The *Essentials of Government in the Zhenguan Reign* focuses on the rule of Emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 626-649), the second emperor of the Tang dynasty, who has long been considered to have been one of its most successful rulers. His reign, known as the Zhenguan 貞觀 era, was marked by economic development and military expansion, and he is judged to have been a wise ruler who relied on rational judgement. After Taizong's death, Wu Jing 吳兢 (670-749), an employee of the Historiographic Institute (Guoshiguan 國史館), compiled a manual of statecraft based on the records of his reign under the title *Zhenguan zhengyao*. This work, divided into sections, each of which focuses on a different topic, takes the form of statements from Taizong, questions that the emperor puts to his ministers and their answers and narrative sections that sometimes draw on the veritable records (*shilu* 實錄). Taizong is presented throughout as an exemplary and wise ruler who listens to the criticisms made by his officials (DeBlasi 2002, 69-73). An illustrative example of its style appears in the opening section:

貞觀初，太宗謂侍臣曰：為君之道，必須先存百姓，若損百姓以奉其身，猶割股以啖腹，腹飽而身斃。

At the beginning of the Zhenguan era, Taizong spoke to the ministers attending him: the Way of the Ruler absolutely requires one to keep the ordinary people safe. If one fails the ordinary people and satisfies oneself, then it is like cutting the flesh of your thighs and filling

your stomach with it: when your stomach is full you die.

It will be noticed that this passage contains an unusual usage of the graph 存 in the sense of 'keep safe' and that the final graph 斃, which is not in the Kangxi dictionary but is a simplified form of 斃, is obscure. We will return to these difficulties later.

Wu Jing presented his work to Emperor Zhongzong 中宗 (r. 705-710) in 706 and then in 720 submitted a revised version to Emperor Xuangzong 玄宗 (r. 712-756), but no further mention is made of it until 807. However, the documentary record in *Tang hui yao* 唐會要 and other works shows that Xianzong 憲宗 (r. 805-820) was the first Chinese emperor to take a serious interest in the *Essentials of Government in the Zhenguan Reign* but he was merely the first of many rulers in East Asia to be exposed to it (Harada 1965, 19-20).

The first known printed edition, which is no longer extant, is one that carries a Jurchen (Jin dynasty) date corresponding to 1169 and is described as such in the *Tianlu linlang catalogue* (*Tianlu linlang shumu* 天祿琳琅書目), which was compiled in 1744.<sup>1</sup> So it appears that this early Jurchen edition was still extant at that point. However, almost all the books listed in the first part of this catalogue were apparently lost when the building in which they were kept burnt down in 1797 and there has been no further sighting of the Jurchen edition (Harada 1965, 246-48; *Tianlu linlang shumu*, juan 3, 46-47 [67-68]; Teng and Biggerstaff 1950, 42-43). Whether this was the *editio princeps* is a matter of doubt. It may be that it reproduced an earlier Song-dynasty edition: there is a brief reference to a Song edition in another catalogue and some clues that point to its transmission to Japan, but there is no hard evidence (Harada 1965, 56-57, 246). In any event, it is striking that the Jurchens should have printed the *Essentials of Government*, particularly given that just twenty years later they made a translation into Jurchen (see below). On the other hand, the Jurchens printed their own edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon in the years 1149-1173, a large part of which survives, so it is clear that they had acquired printing technology and were using it to print texts in Chinese (Li and He 2003, 91-118).

The next edition we know of, again lacking any extant copies, is the influential edition produced by Ge Zhi 戈直 in 1333, which included a selection of comments on the *Essentials of Government in the Zhenguan Reign* which were recorded in writing by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽脩 and Sima Guang 司馬光, as well as others in the Song and Yuan dynasties (Harada 1965, 83). Ge Zhi states in his preface that since the manuscript tradition was full of errors he had consulted many copies to establish a better text: this implies that he had no printed copy at hand and suggests that neither the putative Song edition nor the Jurchen edition was available to him. In fact, this is borne out by the fact that there are a number of obvious errors in Ge Zhi's text as preserved in subsequent editions based upon it:

<sup>1</sup> In this article I use ethnonyms rather than the Chinese names for the so-called "alien dynasties," hence Jurchen rather than Jin.

these evidently derived from a corrupt manuscript tradition. In many respects as a text it is in fact inferior to the early Ming edition of 1390, but probably because it provided all the commentarial material that was useful for palace lecturers it was reproduced in the 1465 Ming edition and thus it was the Ge Zhi recension that became the standard text (Harada 1965, 359-69).

However, thanks to the detective work of the Japanese scholar Harada Taneshige, we now have a much better idea of the text as it was before Ge Zhi's recension. This is mainly due to the survival in Japan of a manuscript which bears the date 1277 and which was evidently based upon earlier copies made there, which in turn were based on manuscripts transmitted from China even earlier, possibly in the Tang dynasty. Harada argues that this manuscript preserves the textual tradition that goes back to the revised version which was presented to emperor Xuangzong and that another copy of the text preserved in Japan similarly preserves the tradition that goes back to the original text which was presented to emperor Zhongzong (Harada 1965, 112-22, 342-50). Whether or not Harada's arguments are accepted, there is no room for doubting that some manuscripts extant in Japan date from a period before Ge Zhi's recension was printed and preserve earlier versions of the text. Harada has therefore used various early manuscripts surviving in Japan to produce what he calls a "definitive" text: in his view this is closer to the original shape of the *Essentials of Government in the Zhenguan Reign* than the Ge Zhi recension (Harada 1962).

### **The *Essentials of Government* outside China**

The *Essentials of Government* was not, it should be remembered, a Classic or a work of scripture: it was instead a manual for rulers and as such there was no religious or educational necessity to transmit the text in its original literary Chinese form alone or merit in doing so. Consequently, it was a text which to an unusual degree was made available outside China in the form of translations, some of which survive to this day. The oldest is probably the translation made in the Tangut (Xixia) empire to the west of Song-dynasty China. The Tanguts developed their own script and used it to translate Buddhist and other works from Chinese and Tibetan, and they also printed works in Tangut or Chinese using either woodblocks or movable type. The Tangut translation of the *Essentials of Government* today survives only in fragments in London and St Petersburg, but it seems from these that it was printed in abridged form with woodblocks some time before the Tangut empire was overrun by the Mongols in 1227, probably in the eleventh or twelfth centuries (Galambos 2015, 152; Shi Jinbo, Wei Tongxian, and E. I. Kychanov 1996-2007, 11: 133-41; Harada 1970, 149-58). The Tanguts also translated a similar work, which has been given the provisional title "Taizong's Questions." The original Chinese version of this text does not appear to be extant, but, along with other works featuring dialogues between Taizong and his ministers, it testifies to the reputation he enjoyed in China as an exemplary ruler (Galambos 2015, 138-55).

Over the succeeding centuries there were also translations into many other languages, but few of them have survived. In the Khitan empire, the so-called Liao dynasty, a translation of the *Essentials of Government* into the Khitan

language and script was prepared in 1047, and by 1189 at the latest there seems to have been a translation into the Jurchen language prepared in that kingdom either in the Khitan script or in the new Jurchen script (*Liao shi*, ch. 103, 1450; *Jin shi*, ch. 99, 2185; Zhou Feng 2009; Kane 2009). Neither of these translations survive, and that has been the fate of most writings in the Khitan and Jurchen scripts. In the late thirteenth century under the Mongol Yuan dynasty, a Uyghur named Antsang (his Chinese name was Anzang 安藏), who had entered Kubilai's court, translated the *Essentials of Government* and several other Chinese texts, presumably into Mongolian, and in the following century it seems that another Mongolian translation was prepared and then printed (Kitsudō 2016, 12; *Yuan shi* ch. 24, 544, ch. 36, 803; Hsiao 1994, 519-20). In 1430 a Mongolian translation (probably the fourteenth-century one) was listed by the Korean court as a textbook for linguists specialising in Mongolian (CWS Sejong sillok 12 [1430].3.18; Ogura Shinpei 1964, 650). Neither of these Mongolian translations has survived, nor has the copy of *Essentials of Government* which reached the Ryūkyū kingdom in the eighteenth century and which Tei Junsoku 程順則 (1663-1734) lectured on to the young Ryūkyūan king (Tsuzuki 1995, 302).

As a result of the poor rate of survival of books in Vietnam it is not currently possible to confirm that an edition of the Chinese text was ever printed there or that there were any translations or bilingual versions of the *Essentials of Government*. Yet it is certain it that reached Vietnam, for its presence is reported by a sixteenth-century Ming writer (*Shuyu Zhouzi lu*, 239). In 1802 Gia Long 嘉隆, the first emperor of the Nguyễn dynasty, was reported to have been given a copy, but it is not clear if it was printed in Vietnam or an imported copy (Langlet 1985-90, 1: 115, 298). Later in the Nguyễn dynasty, the reign of emperor Minh Mạng 明命 (also known as Minh Mệnh, r. 1820-1841) was celebrated in a new work entitled *Essentials of Government in the Minh Mạng Reign* (*Minh Mệnh chính yếu* 明命政要), suggesting that he was in some way on par with Taizong. This work was prepared in 1837 by the Viện cơ mật 院機密 (Secret Institute or Privy Council) which he had established in 1834, and the title was selected in conscious imitation of *Zhenguan zhengyao*. The *Essentials of Government in the Minh Mạng Reign* is a collection of Minh Mạng's precepts and edicts in literary Chinese organized by topics, with the contents within each topic ordered chronologically. It also includes dialogues. A number of printed copies survive of uncertain date: the preface to the only edition available to me is dated 1887 so this edition was clearly edited in the reign of Emperor Thành Thái 成泰 (r. 1889-1907), presumably on the basis of an earlier edition (*Minh Mệnh chính yếu*, vol. 1, 9-17; Trần and Gros, vol. 2, 286). There is no sign, however, of a vernacular or bilingual edition before the twentieth century.

A number of surviving Vietnamese manuscripts use the same “essentials of government” formula, such as *Essentials of Government in Dynasties of the Past* (*Lịch triều chính yếu* 歷朝政要), which covers the political policies of various Chinese dynasties in the form of extracts from the dynastic histories (Trần and Gros, vol. 2, 187). Finally, there is a work entitled *Essentials of Government over the Ages in Imperial Vietnam* (*Hoàng Việt lịch đại chính yếu* 皇越歷代政要), which seems to

have been prepared in 1845. The only extant copy is a manuscript in the National Library of Vietnam which includes the graphs 大成堂藏板 on the central page-fold along with fish-tail designs and therefore appears to be either a manuscript copy of a printed book or possibly a clean copy ready to be pasted onto wooden blocks for carving and printing: the former is more likely to be the case, given that there are scribal errors which have been corrected with red ink throughout. This covers Vietnamese government policies ranging from education and the civil service examinations to punishment and agriculture; the second volume is devoted to the policies of emperor Minh Mạng and bears the title 皇朝明命政要 (*Hoàng Việt Minh Mệnh chính yếu*), but it is much shorter than, and quite different from, *Essentials of Government in the Minh Mạng Reign*. It is perhaps not surprising that the title formula was borrowed in this way, for a work on government in the Song dynasty was published in China as early as 1323 (*Songji sanchao zhengyao* 宋季三朝政要), but this follows chronological order rather than dialogue format or thematic treatment. In the late Qing a number of works were published in China with titles containing the graphs 政要, such as *Essentials of Government in the Kangxi Reign* (*Kangxi zhenyao* 康熙政要, 1910), but it seems probable that up to Minh Mạng's time the term 政要 was primarily associated with the title of the *Essentials of Government*.

In comparison with Vietnam and other societies, Korea and Japan have much more direct and concrete evidence to offer. The *Essentials of Government* is mentioned in the *Catalogue of Books Extant in Japan*, compiled in the 890s, so by then it had undoubtedly reached both Korea and Japan, though the earliest record in Korea comes from 950, when it is recorded that the king read it (*Nihonkoku genzaisho mokuroku*, 138; *Koryōsa* 2:26b [1:60]). In 1116 Kim Injon 金仁存 (d. 1127) was ordered to prepare a commentary on the *Essentials of Government* and in the fourteenth century palace lectures on it were given before the king on numerous occasions (*Koryōsa* 2:26b [1:60], 14:18a [1:285], 45:26a [1:880, 55:3a [2:239], 93:2b [3:78], 96:11a [3:141], 109:7ab [3:385], 117:36a [3:580], 120:12b [3:625], 133:31b [3:880]). By this time it was evidently such a familiar item sought by Korean merchants travelling to China that a manual of spoken Chinese included a dialogue on book-buying and one of the books mentioned was the *Essentials of Government* (Kin Bunkyō, Hyōn Haengja, and Satō Haruhiko 2002, 337-38).

It was, however, during the long Chosŏn dynasty that the *Essentials of Government* assumed a more visible role in Korea. In 1392, it was mentioned in a letter of resignation by Cho Chun 趙浚 (1346-1405) and in 1395 an edited copy was presented to the throne (CWS *T'aejo sillok* 1[1392].12.16, 4[1395].9.4). In 1398 palace lectures were given on it again (CWS *T'aejo sillok* 7[1398].10.5). These examples will suffice to show that the *Essentials of Government* retained its high esteem in the Chosŏn dynasty. In fact, it appears frequently over the succeeding centuries in the pages of sources such as the *Annals of the Chosŏn Dynasty* (*Chosŏn wangjo sillok* 朝鮮王朝實錄), the *Journal of the Royal Secretariat* (*Sŭngjōngwŏn ilgi* 承政院日記) and the *Records of Daily Reflections* (*Ilŭngnok* 日省錄), and in the writings contained in the *Collected Korean Literary Anthologies* (*Han'guk munjip ch'onggan* 韓國文集叢刊).<sup>2</sup>

The first known Korean editions of *Essentials of Government* were

typographic editions printed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Sohn Pow-key 1987, 418, 421; Sin Yang-sŏn 1997, 59). In 1455 King Sejo reported that work was underway on an annotated edition of the *Essentials of Government* and gave orders for it to be completed: the finished edition with annotation provided by Han Gye-hui 韓繼禧 (1423-1482) was published typographically in 1458 under the title *Chŏnggwan chŏng'yo chuhae* 貞觀政要註解 (Essentials of Government of the Zhenguan Reign Annotated) and is based not on the Ge Zhi recension but on the superior early Ming edition (CWS Sejo sillok 1[1455].6.12; Harada 1965, 277, 287-89, plates 29-30). A copy of this must have reached Japan by the Edo period at the latest, and most likely during Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea in the 1590s: this is clear from the fact that a manuscript copy of it survives in the Japanese National Archives with the seal of the Bakufu academy, Shōheizaka Gakumonjo 昌平坂學問所 (Naikaku Bunko #286-123).

There was a further typographic edition printed during the reign of King Yŏngjo in 1735 with a postface by the scholar and official Sŏ Myŏnggyun 徐命均 (1680-1745), who had taken part in one of the regular diplomatic missions to the Qing court. A copy of this work preserved in Columbia University East Asian Library carries a *naesagi* 內賜記 (handwritten note indicating that the book is a royal donation) dated 1735 and addressed to Kim Hŭnggyŏng 金興慶 (1677-1750), whose ownership seal is also found in this copy (*Chŏnggwan chŏng'yo*; Columbia University East Asian Library 1994, 25). King Yŏngjo, who made this donation, in fact included the *Essentials of Government* in the published record of his reading (*Ōje toksŏrok*).<sup>3</sup>

In Korea, it is clear that this text was intimately connected with the royal family. What is striking, however, is that, in spite of all the Tangut, Khitan, Jurchen, and Mongolian translations mentioned above, there does not seem to have been a bilingual “vernacular explanation” (*ŏnhae* 諺解) edition published in Korea. It is true that the palace lectures were of course conducted in Korean, but Korea seems to have been alone (apart from Vietnam) in making do without any vernacular edition and relying on vernacular lectures instead.

As mentioned above, in Japan the *Essentials of Government* was first mentioned in the 890s in the *Catalogue of Books Extant in Japan*. From the middle of the tenth century onwards there are many references to and quotations from it in historical works and diaries, and at least twelve emperors heard lectures on it, but a few examples will suffice: in 1006 it is recorded that Ōe Masahira 大江匡衡 (952-1012) lectured on it to Emperor Ichijō; it is referred to in the *Tale of the Heike* (*Heike monogatari* 平家物語); and the Zen master Dōgen 道元 cites it in his *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* (*Shōbō genzō* 正法眼藏) (Harada 1965, 21-33, 51-52). After

<sup>2</sup> These texts can be found using the Han'guk kojŏn ch'onghap database 韓國古典総合 DB (<http://db.itkc.or.kr/itkcdb/mainIndexIframe.jsp>).

<sup>3</sup> A Japanese catalogue of Korean books published in 1911 includes mention of a work titled *Chŏnggwan chŏng'yo chu* 貞觀政要註, which is described as 李正祖乙亥韓繼禧等註. However, there was no *ŭrhae* 乙亥 year in Chŏngjo's reign and this is clearly a reference to *Chŏnggwan chŏng'yo chuhae*, for which King Sejo gave orders in the *ŭrhae* year 1455 (Chōsen tosho kankōkai 1911, 70).



the foundation in 1192 of the Kamakura shogunate, the *Essentials of Government* was used by the Kamakura shoguns and their households, too. Hōjō Masako 北条政子 (1156-1225), consort of the first ruling shogun Minamoto no Yoritomo 源頼朝, ordered the preparation of a translation of the *Essentials of Government*. This translation was apparently produced by Sugawara Tamenaga 菅原為長 (1158-1246), a court aristocrat who spent his career in the department of finance, and the fact that he had translated it is mentioned in a number of contemporary sources, but what became of it is unknown. It is possible that Tamenaga's translation is one and the same as the translation which survives in a manuscript dated 1595 and several later manuscripts: the 1595 manuscript was, according to its colophon, based on earlier manuscripts in the palace library that are not extant. The translation certainly appears to be based on older versions of the text preceding the Ge Zhi recension, but there is no direct connection between this translation and the version supposedly prepared in the thirteenth century by Tamenaga (Tokutomi 1915; Harada 1965, 55-6, 193-206; Hashimura 2012).

The text of the 1595 manuscript was printed in 1647, and then reprinted in 1915, and from these editions it is clear that the translation is not a written version of a vernacular *kundoku* 訓讀 reading of the text, as is true of the few other *kana* translations that date from before the Edo period (*Lotus sūtra*, *Analects*), but rather a translation much less bound by *kundoku* reading of the original text. The translation retains some of the Chinese vocabulary of the original, it is true, and sometimes adopts a *kundoku* reading of the original but it also omits phrases or paraphrases the original. Katō Kōji's close analysis of the treatment of certain graphs which in *kundoku* practice of the Muromachi period were commonly read twice (e.g., 未, read *imada* ... -zu) appears to show that the translation was certainly carried out much earlier than 1595, increasing the possibility that this is indeed the translation produced by Tamenaga (Katō 2005, 27-33).

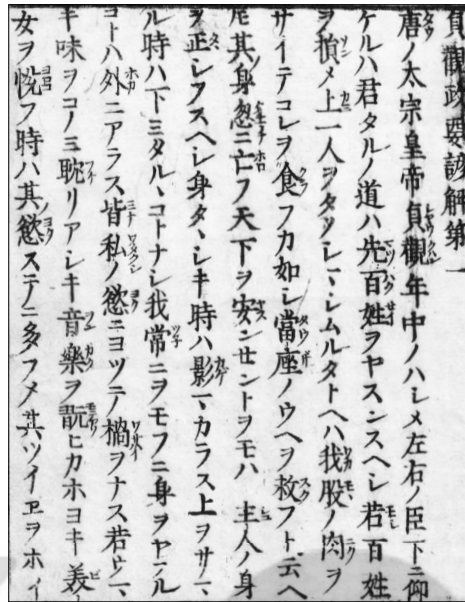
Later shoguns and their regents were also familiar with the *Essentials of Government*. The chronicle of the Kamakura Bakufu, *Azuma kagami*, records that in 1211 the third shogun, Minamoto no Sanetomo 源実朝 (r. 1203-1219), read the *Essentials of Government* in company with others and later the same year discussed it, and in 1250 the regent Hōjō Tokiyori 北条時頼 (1227-1263) had a fine copy of it made and then presented it to the shogunal household (*Azuma kagami* 32: 657 [Kenreki 1[1211].7.4], 32: 659 [Kenreki 1.11.20], 33: 446 [Kenchō 2[1250].5.27]). One of the Kamakura-period copies that survive (partially) is one made in the thirteenth century by the unruly monk Nichiren 日蓮 (1222-1282) in his own hand (Harada 1965, 206-15, plate 13).

In the Edo period, interest in the *Essentials of Government* began with Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate. One of his personal physicians, Itasaka Bokusai 板坂卜齋 (1578-1655), wrote a detailed account of the events of 1600 which culminated in the battle of Sekigahara. This includes an account of Ieyasu's love of learning, and provides a list of his favourite books, including, in addition to the *Essentials of Government*, the Confucian *Analects* and the *Doctrine of the Mean*, and a few other Chinese and Japanese works. This is possibly no more than hagiography, but whatever his personal engagement

with the *Essentials of Government* may have been, there is no doubt that he was lectured on it on a number of occasions, and in 1600 it was one of a small number of texts he ordered to be printed with wooden movable type. Later in 1615 in a set of regulations for the court aristocrats in Kyoto he suggested that the *Essentials of Government* was a suitable text to read for those whose duty it was to rule (Kornicki 2008, 73-8; Harada 1965, 94-6).

After Ieyasu's edition of 1600, which was probably printed in a limited number of copies, numerous xylographic editions were published, but the next edition was another typographic one that was published in 1623. The 1623 edition, like Ieyasu's edition, consisted solely of the literary Chinese text and did not contain any punctuation, let alone any of the *kunten* 訓點 glosses for vernacular *kundoku* 訓讀 reading which became a normal adjunct of Chinese texts in Japanese editions of the Tokugawa period. This was because printing tiny glosses with movable type, albeit not impossible, was a challenge that few printers in the early seventeenth century were prepared to face (Kornicki 2015). Even the earliest surviving manuscript of 1277 is equipped with glosses of various kinds which show that it was being read in the vernacular rather than as a Chinese text (Harada 1965, 112-13). After 1623, xylographic editions were printed in 1653, 1683, 1744, 1818, and 1823. These were mostly based on the Korean annotated edition of 1458 and naturally came equipped with glosses for *kundoku* reading; the 1818 edition, however, was a variorum edition with the base text derived from a Qing edition (Harada 1965, 94-110). It is clear that there was considerable interest in the *Essentials of Government* in the Edo period and the normal expectation is that, like other Chinese texts, it would be read by means of vernacular *kundoku* 訓讀 reading of the Chinese text rather than printed Japanese translations.

In 1647, however, contrary to normal expectations, a translation of *Essentials of Government* was published. As mentioned above, this was not a new rendering and may in fact go back to the translation ordered by Hōjō Masako. In 1669 a second translation was published: this was prepared by the shogunal secretary and advisor Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1583-1857) and was published under the title *Essentials of Government in the Zhenguan Reign Explained in the Vernacular* (*Jōgan seiyō genkai* 貞觀政要諺解). Razan was the first to use the word *genkai* in a book title, and it is likely that he borrowed this term from Korean bilingual books that had been using the same two graphs 諺解, read *ōnhae* in Korean, since the sixteenth century if not before. He would most likely have encountered this usage in Korean books looted by Hideyoshi's armies in the 1590s (Kornicki 2013, 195-97). Be that as it may, the translation was published well after Razan's death, but it appears from the preface written by his son for publication that Razan prepared his translation in 1651 for the benefit of the fourth shogun, Tokugawa Ietsuna 徳川家綱 (1641-1680, r. 1651-1680) and that he did so at the request of Abe Tadaaki 阿部忠秋 (1602-1675), who was one of the Senior Councillors under both Ietsuna and his father. Why Abe commissioned Razan to produce a new translation rather than simply use the edition of 1647 is unclear, but Razan's status and the fact that the 1647 edition was anonymous and based on a text that differed from the familiar Ge Zhi recension were probably the key factors.



**Figure. 1** The first page of the text of *Jōgan seiyō genkai* 貞観政要諺解第一 (Essentials of Government of the Zhenguan Reign Explained in the Vernacular), a translation of *Zhenguan zhengyao* into Japanese by Hayashi Razan that was published in 1669.

Ietsuna was less than ten years old when he succeeded his father to the post of shogun. Although it would be expected that by that age he would have had sufficient training to be able to read Chinese texts relying on the vernacular glosses, such training focused on the practice of reading rather than comprehension (Nakamura 1997). Consequently it seems reasonable that Abe considered a translation the best means to acquaint the young shogun with the lessons provided by the *Essentials of Government* concerning the duties he would be expected to fulfil. After all, *kundoku* reading requires understanding the sense even of obsolete vocabulary, whereas Razan's translation replaced difficult or obscure terms in the *Essentials of Government* with contemporary equivalents. Let us return, then, to the opening passage cited at the outset of this article: below it will be found the text of the 1647 edition, which may date from the early Kamakura period, which in turn is followed by Razan's translation (Figure. 1):

貞観初、太宗謂侍臣曰：為君之道、必須先存百姓、若損百姓以奉其身、猶割股以啖腹、腹飽而身  
斃。

貞観ノ初。太宗侍臣ニカタツテ。ノタマハク。君タル道先。百姓ヲユタカニスベシ。百姓ヲ損ジ  
テ。我身ヲ利センコトハ。脛ヲ割テ。腹ニクラハシムルニ。腹ニアクトイフトモ。身ハ斃シメン  
ガ如シ。(Kana *Jōgan seiyō*, 7: furigana omitted. Transcription corrected with reference to 1647  
blockprinted edition.)

唐ノ太宗皇帝貞觀年中ノハジメ左右ノ臣下ニ仰ケルハ君タル道ハ先百姓ヲヤスンズベシ。  
若百姓ヲ損メ上一人ヲタノシマシムルタトヘハ我股ノ肉ヲサイテコレヲ食フカ如シ。当座ノ  
ウエヲ救フト云ヘドモ其ノ身忽ニ亡フ。(Jōgan seiyō genkai, maki 1, 1a; voicing marks added,  
furigana omitted, see Figure. 1)

It will be clear from the extract above that Razan added explanatory phrases that are not in the original (唐ノ and 皇帝), has replaced the graph 存 with a vernacular verb (ヤスンズ) and the graphs 其身 with a Japanese term signifying ‘ruler’ (上一人), and has replaced the final phrase of the simile (腹飽而身斃) with an extended paraphrase meaning “you may save the day but you will die straight away.” These changes have the merit of making the sense more accessible at the cost of losing some of the vocabulary of the original. This ran contrary to the fundamental principles of the vernacular reading techniques used in Korea and Japan, which required readers to manipulate the unchanged but glossed original text. The 1647 edition, on the other hand, keeps rather closer to the original but is not merely a transcription of a *kundoku* reading: there are no explanatory additions and more of the original vocabulary is preserved, it is true, but the problematic graph 存 is here too replaced with a vernacular expression (ユタカニス), the graph 奉 is replaced by a more explicit expression (利セン) and the difficult final graph of the original is replaced with the standard form 斃 of which it is a variant. In other words, the changes made were minimal, while Razan’s were more extensive and he did not refrain from making explanatory additions to the text. What is remarkable is that there were two separate translations of the *Essentials of Government* available in seventeenth-century Japan, when few works were being translated at all: the normal route to Chinese text was via *kunten* glosses that assisted readers with the vernacular reading.

## Conclusion

The vernacular reading techniques of Korea and Japan were developed primarily for reading Buddhist scriptures and the texts of the Confucian tradition, and only later were they applied to other texts, including domestically produced texts in literary Chinese. The *Essentials of Government* was not a classic requiring the original text to be mastered but a manual, and the purpose of a manual is primarily to provide guidance. It is surely for this reason that the *Essentials of Government* was primarily approached in other societies by means of the vernacular. Korea (and probably Vietnam) appears to be the one exception, but even in Korea an annotated edition was prepared to facilitate understanding. The probable explanation for the absence of a vernacular edition is that competence in literary Chinese was expected in the Korean court and even the person of the king, whereas it was the opposite expectation that led to the perceived need for translations in the Tangut, Khitan, Jurchen, and Mongolian states, and also in Japan. The lack of a vernacular edition in Korea, though, does not necessarily mean that those who needed to be familiar with its contents, particularly the successive kings, had sufficient mastery of literary Chinese. They may well have, but if they did not, the institution of the palace lecture made sure that vernacular exegeses were also available.

The plethora of surviving manuscripts and the fact that editions were printed in China, Korea, Japan, and the Jurchen empire suggest that, in spite of its lasting value as a manual for rulers as revealed particularly by the Japanese and Korean records, it enjoyed a much wider readership at the same time. The reasons for this are probably twofold. Firstly, at the same time as being a manual it provided an insight into the governance of the Tang dynasty at its peak and as such was also a valuable historical document, one that may have had more appeal once the Tang Empire was a thing of the past. Secondly, guidance for rulers may also serve as information for officialdom and even for the ruled about the workings and expectations of benevolent governance.

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